

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

in Iran, no doubt because of fear lest their information might facilitate the task of the Iranian police.

Of that underground period in the party's history only a few definite facts can be ascertained. It is known that the party relied heavily upon the national minorities in Iran, especially the Armenians and to some extent the Assyrians. Its activities centered mainly in the north of Iran, presumably because of the convenient proximity to the Soviet border, but it extended also to Teheran. For a number of years in the 1930's the presidency of the party was in the hands of Sultan-zadeh, who was assisted in his work by Hasanoff and Shareqi. The party held a congress with the Turkish Communist party at Urumia in 1937 and there decided to send Hasanoff as Iranian delegate to the ninth Plenum of the Comintern. Soviet consular and diplomatic representatives, especially in the north, aided the party. At one time the Soviet consul in Meshed, Apresoff, was recalled to Moscow. George Agabekov, a former member of the Soviet secret police, wrote in this connection in his memoirs:

Apresoff's recall displeased the Persian Communists. A letter was sent to Chicherin, Stalin, and Djerzhinsky, expressing the hope of the Iranian Communist Party, of the Communist Youth of Iran, and of certain elements of Persian workers, that the action in Apresoff's case would be reversed; for the origin and development of the Communist movement in Persia were entirely due to Apresoff.³⁰

This laudatory tone toward Apresoff seems to be slightly exaggerated as it is difficult to imagine how a consul in Meshed could be responsible for the whole of the Iranian Communist movement, yet it is eloquent of the role played by the Soviet

representative in the region
of Khorasan at least.

Thus the party, despite all odds, continued its
existence, and
whenever necessary its morale was bolstered up by
the expert advice
of special Comintern agents dispatched to Iran. By
1928 even the
basically favorable attitude of Soviet oriental experts
toward Reza
Shah did not prevent the principal organ of the
Comintern from
flaring up in an outburst of indignation against the
Iranian regime.
For example, in its traditional column "The White
Terror," where

ao *op. cit*, p. 76.